

storing said inputted unit of programming at said selected location.

3. The method of claim 58, wherein said station comprises a plurality of storage devices, said step of storing at least one of said units of programming comprises the steps of:

selecting a specific storage device;

inputting said unit of programming to said selected storage device; and

storing said inputted unit of programming in said selected storage device.

5. A method of controlling, at an intermediate television transmission station, the communication of television programming to a subscriber, said station having a computer for controlling the storage and communication of said television programming, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving units of said television programming, by said station, from a remote television programming source;

receiving signals from said remote source, each of said signals identifying one of said received units or the source of one of said received units ;

inputting said signals to the computer;

storing at least one of said received units ;

receiving at the computer a programming schedule, said programming schedule designating for at least one of said received units or said at least one stored unit at least one of:

(a) an output channel to be used in communicating the at least one of said received units or said at least one stored unit to said subscriber; and

(b) a time the at least one of said received units or said at least one stored unit is to be communicated to said subscriber; and

communicating at least one of said received units or said at least one stored unit from said station to said subscriber according to the programming schedule.

7. The method of claim 5, wherein said station comprises a plurality of receivers for receiving the received units and the signals, said step of inputting comprising the steps of:

selecting a specific one of said receivers; and

inputting said signals received by said selected receiver to said computer.

8. The method of claim 5, wherein said at least one stored unit is stored at a local programming source, said local source comprising a television programming storage device located at said station for storing said at least one stored unit.

9. The method of claim 5, further comprising the step of logging said step of communicating.

10. (Twice Amended) A method of controlling, at an intermediate transmission station, the communication of television programming to a subscriber, said station comprising a computer for controlling the communication of said television programming, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving units of said television programming, to be communicated to said subscriber, from a remote television programming source;

loading a plurality of prerecorded units of said television programming, to be communicated to said subscriber, onto a local programming source located at said station;

receiving a plurality of signals from a remote programming source, each of said signals designating one unit of said loaded units [or] and said received units;

identifying in response to each of said signals said one unit designated by said signal, the one unit being selected from:

(a) the received units received at said station from the remote source; and

(b) the loaded units loaded onto the local source,

said local source comprising a programming storage device located at said station;

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communicating each said one unit to the subscriber based on said step of identifying.

11. The method of claim 10 further comprising a step of receiving a programming schedule, said programming schedule designating at least one of a time and an output channel for communicating each said one unit to said subscriber, wherein said step of communicating comprises the step of communicating each said one unit to the subscriber according to the programming schedule.

13. The method of claim 10, wherein said step of communicating comprises the step of communicating each said one unit to the subscriber according to said each of said signals, said each of said signals further designating at least one of a time and a channel for communicating said one unit to the subscriber.

16. The method of claim 10 further comprising the step of storing one of said received units received by said station in the storage device.

17. The method of claim 11, wherein said step of identifying comprises the steps of:  
comparing said each of said signals to data in said programming schedule, said data identifying the one unit ;

determining based on said programming schedule whether the one unit designated by said each of said signals will be received from the remote source and should be communicated immediately upon receipt to the subscriber, or whether the one unit is loaded onto the local source and should be output therefrom to the subscriber, each of said prerecorded units loaded onto the local source being stored at a storage location on the local source; and

identifying the storage location of the one unit designated by said each of said signals if the one unit is loaded onto the local source.

18. The method of claim 10 wherein there are different types of said plurality of signals, and only some of said signals each designate one of said one unit.

19. The method of claim 10 and further comprising the step of logging said step of communicating.

20. An apparatus located at an intermediate television transmission station for controlling the communication of units of television programming to a plurality of subscribers, said apparatus comprising:

a receiver for receiving said units of television programming and signals from a remote programming source, each of said received signals identifying one unit of the received units or identifying the programming source of the received units;

a television programming storage device for storing said units of television programming and for outputting or playing said stored units, said storage device storing signals identifying the stored units;

a switch having inputs operatively connected to said receiver and said storage device, said switch having one or more outputs operatively connected to one or more output channels;

a computer operatively connected to said receiver, said switch and said storage device, said computer having access to a programming schedule, the programming schedule designating for at least one unit of said received units or said stored units at least one of:

- (a) a time to communicate to the subscriber; and
- (b) an output channel to be used for communicating to the subscriber; and

said computer selecting each of said at least one unit of said received units or said stored units designated by said programming schedule based upon said received signals and said stored signals, and said computer configuring said switch and controlling said storage device to communicate said selected units to the subscriber according to said programming schedule.

22. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein said storage device comprises a plurality of television programming storage devices connected to said switch, said computer further configuring said switch to select a specific one of said plurality of television programming storage devices.

23. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein said received signals further include information designating one of said received units for storage or delayed communication to the subscriber, wherein said computer further operates to control said switch and said storage device to store ones of said received units that are designated by said received signals for storage or delayed communication to the subscriber.

31. A method of controlling at an intermediate television transmission station the communication of television programming to a subscriber, said station having a computer for controlling the communication of said television programming, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving at least one unit of said television programming from a remote programming source;

receiving a signal;

storing a plurality of units of said television programming on a local programming source;

receiving a programming schedule designating for said received at least one unit or said stored units at least one of:

(a) an output channel to be used in communicating said received at least one unit or said stored units;

(b) an approximate time for communicating to the subscriber said received at least one unit or said stored units;

detecting said signal;

passing said detected signal to the computer;  
identifying that said detected signal is a predetermined signal; and  
communicating one unit of said received unit or said stored units from said station to at least one of said subscriber in response to said step of identifying and according to said programming schedule.

32. The method of claim 31, wherein said signal is one of a plurality of different signals, said step of identifying comprises the step of identifying an instruct-to-delay signal, and said method further comprises the steps of selecting one of said received at least one unit and storing said selected unit in response to said step of identifying the instruct-to-delay signal, thereby allowing a delayed communication of the selected unit .

33. The method of claim 32 wherein the selected unit is identified by said instruct-to-delay signal.

34. The method of claim 32 wherein said selected unit is identified by being transmitted with said instruct-to-delay signal from the remote source.

35. The method of claim 31, wherein said signal is one of a plurality of signals, said step of identifying comprises the step of identifying an instruct-to-communicate signal, said step of communicating being performed in response to said step of identifying said instruct-to-communicate signal, said step of communicating comprises the steps of:

selecting a unit from one of:  
(a) the stored units stored on the local source; and  
(b) the received at least one unit received from the remote source; and  
communicating said selected unit to the subscriber at a time and on an output channel according to said programming schedule.

36. The method of claim 31, wherein said signal is one of a plurality of different signals, said step of identifying comprises the step of identifying an instruct-to-determine-input signal, and said step of communicating comprises the steps of:

selecting a unit from one of:

(a) the stored units stored on the local source, said local source being operatively connected to a first input of a switch; and

(b) the received at least one unit received from the remote source, said received unit being operatively connected to a second input of the switch, the switch operatively connecting one of the first and second inputs to a switch output;

identifying one of the first and second inputs from which to communicate said selected unit to the subscriber in response to said instruct-to-determine-input signal;

configuring the switch to transfer the selected unit from the identified input to the switch output;

communicating said selected unit from the switch output to the subscriber according to said programming schedule.

37. The method of claim 31, wherein said signal is one of a plurality of different signals, said step of identifying comprises the step of identifying an instruct-to-determine-output signal, and said step of communicating comprises the steps of:

selecting a unit from one of:

(a) the stored units stored on the local source; and

(b) the received unit received from the remote source;

identifying an output channel over which to communicate said selected unit to the subscriber in response to said instruct-to-determine-input signal; and

communicating said selected unit to the subscriber over the identified output channel.

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38. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 31, wherein said signal is one of a plurality of different signals, the station comprising a switch [electrically] operatively connecting first and second switch inputs to a plurality of switch outputs, each of said switch outputs [electrically] operatively connected to one said output channel, the stored units and the received unit [electrically] operatively connected to said first and second switch inputs, respectively, said step of identifying comprises the step of identifying an instruct-to-transfer signal, and said step of communicating comprises the steps of:

selecting a unit of programming from the stored units or the received unit;

identifying one of the first and second switch inputs from which to communicate the selected unit;

identifying one of said switch outputs to which to transfer said selected unit, said one switch output being identified through the designation of the output channel by the programming schedule;

communicating a switch control signal to the switch in response to said steps of identifying said one of the first and second switch inputs and the one switch output;

configuring said switch in response to said switch control signal to transfer said selected unit from said identified one of said first and second switch inputs to said identified one switch output;

communicating the selected unit according to said programming schedule over a cable television distribution system.

39. The method of either of claims 32, 35, or 37 wherein said step of communicating further comprises the steps of:

communicating a switch control signal to a switch;

configuring said switch in response to said switch control signal to transfer one unit of said received unit or said stored units from a selected input of said switch to a selected output of said switch.

40. A method of controlling at an intermediate television transmission station the communication of units of television programming to a subscriber, said station having a computer for controlling the communication of said television programming, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving units of said television programming from at least one remote television programming source;

receiving a control signal from said at least one remote source and inputting said control signal together with information designating at least one of:

- (a) one of said received units ;
- (b) a programming source; and
- (c) a transmission channel;

selecting one of said received units in response to said inputted control signal and said information;

identifying an output channel in response to said inputted control signal and said information;

receiving a programming schedule designating for each of a plurality of said received units at least one of:

- (a) an output channel to be used in communicating the selected unit ; and
- (b) a time said selected unit is to be communicated to said subscriber; and

communicating the selected unit from said station to at least one said subscriber according to the programming schedule.

42. The method of claim 40 wherein said station has a plurality of said output channels to be used in communicating said the selected unit to said subscriber, said step communicating further comprising the steps of:

communicating switch control signals to a switch;

configuring said switch to communicate said selected unit to the identified output channel.

44. The method of claim 40 and further comprising the step of logging said step of communicating.

49. The method of claim 8, 17, or 42 further comprising the step of identifying a specific one of said received units of on the basis of a unit identification signal embedded in said received unit .

50. The method of claim 8, 17, 31, 38 or 42 further comprising the step of logging a unit identification signal identifying at least one of:

- (a) said time ; and
- (b) said output channel .

51. The method of claim 5, 11, 31 or 40, wherein said step of receiving said programming schedule comprises the steps of receiving the programming schedule from a remote information source and storing the programming schedule.

52. The method of claim 8, 17, or 42, wherein said programming schedule is received from a remote information source.

53. The method of claim 31, wherein said step of storing comprises the steps of:  
loading a plurality of prerecorded ones of said units of television programming onto the local source; and  
storing a plurality of said received at least one unit on the local source.

54. The method of claim 31, wherein said signal is one of a plurality of different signals, said step of identifying comprises the step of identifying an instruct-to-overlay signal, said step of communicating being performed in response to identifying the instruct-to-overlay signal, said step of communicating comprises the steps of:

selecting one of said received at least one unit from the remote source;

selecting one of said stored units stored on the local source ;

communicating to the subscriber said selected one of said received at least one unit and said selected one of said stored units to allow combined presentation to the subscriber .

55. The method of claim 31, wherein said step of receiving comprises the step of receiving a programming transmission via satellite from a television network, said programming transmission comprising said at least one unit of said television programming and one or more digital signals embedded in the programming transmission.

56. A method of controlling, at a television transmission station, the communication of programming from at least one programming source to a subscriber, the station including a computer for controlling the communication of said television programming, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving at least one unit of said television programming at the station from a remote television programming source;

loading or inputting at least one prerecorded unit of said television programming onto a local programming source;

receiving at the computer a programming schedule that designates, for said loaded at least one unit or said received at least one unit , at least one of:

- (a) an output channel to be used in communicating ; and
- (b) a time for communicating to a subscriber;

selecting one of said loaded or said received at least one unit , based on said programming schedule, for communication from:

(a) said received at least one unit received by said station from the remote source; and

(b) said loaded at least one unit loaded onto the local source;

communicating said selected unit from said station to at least one said subscriber according to said programming schedule; and

logging and step of communicating the selected unit.

57. The method of claim 56 wherein said step of receiving comprises the steps of receiving said programming schedule from a remote information source and storing the programming schedule in the computer, the programming schedule designating for said received at least one unit or said loaded at least one unit :

(a) said output channel ; and

(b) the time .

58. The method of claim 56 wherein said step of loading or inputting comprises the step of loading a tape onto a video tape player/recorder, said tape player/recorder located at the station, said tape having said loaded at least one unit prerecorded thereon.

59. The method of claim 56 wherein said step of receiving comprises the step of receiving a plurality of units of said television programming via satellite from a television network.

60. The method of claim 56, further comprising the step of storing said received at least one unit received from said remote source on a video tape player/recorder at said station for delayed communication to the subscriber.

61. The method of claim 56, wherein said step of communicating further comprises communicating a unit identification signal with the selected unit, said unit identification signal identifying the selected unit, wherein said step of logging comprises the steps of:

detecting the unit identification signal during said step of communicating; and

creating a record evidencing said step of communicating the selected unit to the subscriber based on said step of detecting.

62. A method of controlling, at a television transmission station the communication of television programming from a plurality of programming sources to a subscriber, said station having a computer for controlling the communication of programming, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving a plurality of units of said television programming from a remote television programming source;

storing at least one of said received units received from said remote source at said station;

receiving a programming schedule that designates for at least one unit of said received units or said stored unit at least one of:

(a) an output channel to be used in communicating; and

(b) a time for communicated to the subscriber;

selecting one of said received units or said stored at least one unit for communication from:

(a) said received units received from the remote source but which are not stored at said station; and

(b) said stored at least one unit;

communicating said selected unit from said station to at least one said subscriber according to said programming schedule; and

logging said step of communicating.

63. A method of controlling, at a television transmission station, the communication of television programming from a plurality of programming sources to a subscriber, said station having a computer for controlling the communication of said television programming, said station having a switch, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving at a receiver located at the station a unit of said television programming from a remote television programming source, the receiver connected to a first input of the switch;

storing a plurality of units of said television programming on a local programming source, the local source being connected to a second input of the switch;

receiving at the computer a programming schedule that designates for at least one unit of said received unit or said stored units at least one of:

- (a) a time for communication to the subscriber; and
- (b) an output channel to be used in communicating to the subscriber;

selecting one unit of said received unit or said stored units based on said programming schedule;

identifying said first switch input;

communicating a switch control signal from the computer to the switch;

configuring the switch in response to the switch control signal to transfer the selected unit from the identified said first switch input to a switch output;

communicating the selected unit from the switch output to the subscriber over said output channel according to the programming schedule; and

logging said step of communicating.

64. The method of claim 63 wherein said step of storing comprises the steps of:

storing said received unit on the local source; and

loading a plurality of prerecorded units of said television programming onto the local source.

65. A method of controlling, at a television transmission station, the communication of units of television programming to a subscriber, the station having a computer for controlling the communication of units of said television programming, said station comprising a switch that selectively connects one of a plurality of switch inputs to a switch output, said method comprising the steps of:

storing a plurality of said units of television programming onto one of a plurality of programming sources, each of said programming sources operatively connected to one of said switch inputs;

receiving a plurality of signals from a remote programming source;

receiving at the computer a programming schedule that designates for at least one of said stored units at least one of:

(a) an output channel to be used in communicating ; and

(b) a time for communicating to the subscriber;

passing said received signals to the computer;

selecting one of said stored units in response to one of said signals;

identifying one of the switch inputs that are connected to the programming source storing the selected unit;

configuring the switch to transfer the selected unit from the identified one of the switch inputs to the switch output;

communicating the selected unit from the switch output to the subscriber according to the programming schedule; and

logging the step of communicating.

66. The method of claim 65 wherein said step of storing comprises the step of loading a plurality of prerecorded ones of said units of television programming onto the programming sources.

67. The method of claim 65 wherein said step of storing comprises the steps of:  
receiving a plurality of said units of programming from a television network; and  
storing said received units on the programming sources.
68. A method of controlling the communication of units of television programming to a subscriber comprising the steps of:  
receiving a plurality of said units of television programming from a remote programming source;  
storing a plurality of said units of television programming on a local programming source;  
receiving a plurality of signals from said remote source;  
receiving at a computer a programming schedule that designates for one or more units of said stored units or said received units at least one of:
  - (a) an output channel to be used in communicating ; and
  - (b) a time for communicating to the subscriber;  
selecting one unit of said stored units or said received units based upon at least one of said received signals; and  
communicating said selected unit to the subscriber at the time or on the channel designated by said programming schedule.
69. The method of claim 68 further comprising a step of logging the step of communicating said selected unit to the subscriber.
70. The method of claim 68 wherein said step of storing comprises the steps of:  
loading a plurality of prerecorded ones of said units of television programming onto the local source; and

storing said received units on the local source.

71. The method of claim 68 wherein said step of receiving a plurality of signals comprises the step of receiving said plurality of signals from the remote programming source, each of said signals identifying either one unit of said stored units or said received units or a source of one unit of said stored units or said received units.

72. A method of controlling, at a transmission station, the communication of units of television programming to a subscriber, the station having a computer for controlling the communication of said television programming, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving a plurality of units of said television programming from a remote programming source;

receiving a plurality of signals from a remote signal source;

selecting one of said received units in response to one of said signals;

determining, based on said one signal, whether said selected unit should be retransmitted to the subscriber immediately or whether said selected unit should be stored on a local programming source for delayed communication to the subscriber;

storing said selected unit on the local source if, based upon said step of determining, said selected unit should be stored for said delayed communication;

receiving a programming schedule that designates for some of said received units at least one of:

(a) an output channel to be used in communicating ; and

(b) a time for communication to the subscriber;

communicating, at the time or on the output channel designated by said programming schedule, said selected unit from the local source to the subscriber if the selected unit is stored on the local source ;

logging the step of communicating to the subscriber.

73. The method of claim 72 further comprising the step of communicating said selected unit to the subscriber if, based on said step of determining, the selected unit should be retransmitted immediately.

74. The method of claim 72 wherein said step of communicating comprises the steps of:  
outputting, at a time or on a channel designated by said schedule, said selected unit from the local source if the selected unit is stored on the local source; and  
transmitting the outputted unit to the subscriber via a cable distribution system.

75. A method of controlling at a television programming transmission station the communication of units of said television programming to a subscriber, the station having a computer for controlling the communication of programming, said method comprising the steps of:

storing a unit of said television programming and a unit identification signal on a local programming source, said unit identification signal identifying said unit of television programming;

receiving at the computer a programming schedule that designates for said stored unit at least one of:

- (a) an output channel to be used in communicating ; and
- (b) a time for communicating to the subscriber;

outputting said stored unit and said unit identification signal from the local source at the time or onto the output channel designated by said programming schedule;

communicating at least said outputted stored unit and said outputted unit identification signal to the subscriber;

detecting the unit identification signal outputted from the local programming source; and  
logging said step of communicating based upon said step of detecting.

76. The method of claim 75 wherein said step of logging comprises the step of creating a record evidencing said step of communicating.

77. The method of claim 75 wherein said step of communicating comprises the step of communicating said outputted unit and said outputted unit identification signal to the subscriber.

78. (Twice Amended) A method of controlling at a television transmission station the communication of television programming from at least one programming source to a subscriber, the station having a computer for controlling the communication of said television programming, the station comprising a switch, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving a unit of said television programming from a remote programming source;

receiving at a receiver a signal from the remote programming source, the receiver [electrically] operatively connected to a first input of the switch;

storing a plurality of units of said programming onto a local programming source located at said station, said local source operatively connected to a second input of the switch;

scheduling, for communication, one of said stored units;

selecting at least one unit of said received unit or said stored units based on the received signal;

identifying the first or second input connected to the selected unit;

communicating a switch control signal from the computer to the switch;

configuring the switch in response to said switch control signal to transfer the selected unit from the identified switch input to a switch output;

communicating said selected unit from said switch output to the subscriber.

79. (Twice Amended) A method of controlling the communication of television programming to a subscriber, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving a unit of said television programming from a remote programming source;  
receiving at a receiver a signal from the remote source, said receiver [electrically]  
operatively connected to a first input of a switch;

storing a unit of said programming on a local programming source, said local  
programming source [electrically] operatively connected to a second input of the switch, the  
switch [electrically] operatively connecting one of the first or second inputs to at least one  
switch output;

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receiving a programming schedule designating for at least one unit of said received unit  
or said stored unit at least one of:

- (a) an output channel to be used in communicating ;
- (b) a time for communicating to the subscriber;

detecting said received signal;

identifying that said detected signal is a predetermined signal; and

selecting one unit of said received unit or said stored unit in response to said step of  
identifying said detected signal;

identifying the first or second input connected to the selected unit;

configuring the switch to transfer the selected unit from the identified first or second  
input to the at least one switch output;

communicating the selected unit from the at least one switch output to the subscriber,  
said selected unit being communicated with a unit identification signal and according to said  
programming schedule, said unit identification signal identifying the selected unit; and

logging said step of communicating, said step of logging comprises the steps of:

- (a) detecting the unit identification signal during said step of communicating; and
- (b) creating a record evidencing said step of communicating based on said step of  
detecting the unit identification signal.

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80. The method of claim 78 or 79 wherein said step of storing comprises the steps of:

storing said received unit on the local source; and  
loading a plurality of prerecorded units of said television programming onto the local source.

81. The method of claim 62, 63, 65, 68, 72, 75, 78 or 79 wherein said step of receiving said programming schedule comprises the steps of:

receiving the programming schedule from a remote information source; and  
storing the received programming schedule.

82. The method of claim 5, 10, 31, 40, 56, 62, 63, 65, 68, 72, 75, 78, or 79, wherein said step of receiving said units of said television programming from said remote source further comprises the step of receiving data identifying said units.

83. (Twice Amended) An apparatus for controlling the communication of units of television programming to a plurality of subscribers, said apparatus comprising:

a receiver for receiving units of said television programming and signals from a remote programming source;

a television programming storage device storing said television programming units and for outputting or playing said stored units, said storage device storing signals identifying the stored units;

a switch having inputs operatively connected to said receiver and said storage device, said switch having one or more outputs operatively connected to one or more output channels;

a computer [O]operatively connected to said receiver, said switch and said storage device, said computer having access to a programming schedule, the programming schedule designating for at least one unit of said received units or said stored units at least one of:

(a) a time to communicate to the subscriber; and

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(b) one of said one or more output channels to be used for communicating to the subscriber; and  
said computer programmed to perform the following steps:  
(a) selecting each said unit of said received units or said stored units designated by said programming schedule from said received units and said stored units;  
(b) configuring said switch and controlling said storage device to communicate said selected units to the subscriber according to said programming schedule.

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84. An apparatus for controlling the communication of units of television programming to a plurality of subscribers, said apparatus comprising:

a plurality of storage devices, each of said storage devices storing at least one unit of said television programming and selectively outputting or playing television programming stored units, said storage device storing unit identification signals identifying the stored units;

a switch having inputs connected to said storage devices, said switch having one or more outputs operatively connected to one or more output channels;

a computer operatively connected to said switch and said storage devices, said computer having access to a programming schedule, the programming schedule designating for at least one unit of said stored units at least one of:

- (a) a time to communicate to the subscribers; and
- (b) an output channel for communicating to the subscribers;

a signal detector connected to the computer for detecting the unit identification signals; and

said computer programmed to perform the following steps for each unit of said stored units designated in the programming schedule:

- (a) identifying one of said storage devices storing the designated unit;
- (b) configuring said switch and controlling said storage device to output the designated unit with its unit identification signal;